

ACCORD

Pakistan Update

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Islamic Republic of Pakistan

COUNTRY PROFILE

Location: South Asia
 Area: 803,940 sq km
 Capital: Islamabad
 Independence: August 14, 1947 from United Kingdom
 Constitution: April 10, 1973 (suspended 1977-85, October 1999-)
 Population (1999 est.): 138,123,359 (0-14 41%; 65+ 4%)
 Suffrage: 18 years old; Pakistani citizenship
 Ethnicity: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, Mohajir
 Languages: Punjabi 48%, Sindhi 12%, Siraiiki 10%, Pashtu 8%, Urdu* 8%, Balochi 3%, Hindko 2%, Brahui 1%, English*, Burushaski
 Religions: Sunni Muslim 77%, Shi'a Muslim 20%, Christian, Hindu and other 3%

Head of State

President Mohammad Rafiq Tarar (b. 1929): elected by the Parliament on 1 January 1998; 5-year term

Cabinet: elected by the National Assembly

* Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (b. 1949) elected by the National Assembly on 17 February 1997; ousted on 12 October 1999, replaced by Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf

Political parties/organizations:

ANP - Awami National Party (Ajmal Khan Khattak)

BNP - Baluchistan National Party

JI - Jamiat-e-Islami

JUP - Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan

JWP [Jamhoori Watan Party] - Republican Nation Party (Akbar Khan Bugti)

KN - Khatam-e-Nabuwat

MQM [Mohajir Quami Mahaz] - Mohajir National Movement

- MQM-A - Altaf faction (Altaf Hussain)

- MQM-H - Haqiqi faction (Haqiqi)

NPP - National People's Party (Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi)

PKMAP [Pakhtun Khawa Mill Awami Party] - Pakhtun Khwa National People's Party (Mahmood Khan Achakzai)

PML - Pakistan Muslim League

- PML-F - Functional Group (Pir Pagaro)

- PML-J - Junejo faction (Hamid Nasir Chattha)

- PML-N - Nawaz Sharif faction (Nawaz Sharif)

PPP - Pakistan People's Party (Benazir Bhutto)

Economy:

GDP - real growth rate: 3.1% (1999 est.)

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$2,000 (1999 est.)

Exports: \$8.4 billion (f.o.b., 1999) US 22%, Hong Kong 7%, UK 7%, Germany 7%

Imports: \$9.8 billion (f.o.b., 1999) US 8%, Japan 8%, Malaysia 7%, Saudi Arabia 7%

Debt - external: \$32 billion (1999 est.)

Economic aid - recipient: \$2 billion (FY97/98)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 6% (1999 est.)

Labor force - by occupation: agriculture 44%, industry 17%, services 39% (1999 est.)

Unemployment rate: 7% (FY98/99 est.)

Population below poverty line: 34% (1991 est.)

1 Pakistani Rupee (PRe) = 100 paisa, m.float; exchange rate: US\$1 = PRs 51.90 (Dec. 1999)

I. BACKGROUND

I. 1. General background

According to the 1998 Census, there were 130 mio. people living in Pakistan. The rapid increase of 46 mio. since 1981 was mainly attributable to the growth of the urban population. The literacy rate of 38 percent (1995) for adult Pakistanis is very low as compared to India (85%) and Sri Lanka (91%). We also find a considerable gap between the literacy rate for women (24%) and men (50%). Primary school enrolment is 62%, compared to 90% for India and 100% for Sri Lanka - and enrolment in institutions of higher education is as low as 7%. In essence, then, a person who knows how to sign his or her name can already be regarded as educated. Many NGOs are trying to fight for educational and women's rights, but are hampered by a severe lack of funding. So far, besides declarations by Benazir Bhutto, which were never realised in practice, there has been no serious effort to push either for better education nor any sign of improvement of the situation of women. By and large, this is due to the fact that more educated people are better informed about their rights and less easily manipulated, which, quite independent of the question of who is in power, might not lie in the interest of the Pakistani elite.

The most important region in Pakistan is the Punjab, with ethnic Punjabis representing the biggest of the 56 language groups living in Pakistan. Although most of the national income is generated in Karachi and the Sindh area, the vast majority of investments are undertaken in the highly industrialised Punjab, which has been a constant source of conflict between the Mohajir (since 1997 'Mottahida') Qaumi Movement (MQM)¹ and the Punjabi-dominated political elite and national government. In addition, 70 percent of the army high command originate in the Punjab region.

I. 2. Political background

A very distinct feature of Pakistani national culture is tribal and clan affiliation. As a consequence, people do not vote for parties or programmes, but primarily for persons as representatives of their clans/families. This is also reflected in the organisational setup of most parties, with next to none inner-party democracy, very steep hierarchies and the predominant status of certain leading figures/families within the party organizations. In addition, people also switch from one party to the other for money, i.e. they vote for the party that offers them more material incentives, i.e. money for their vote. Even members of parliament tended to do so before a law passed under the Nawaz-Sharif government provided that those MPs who changed party membership in an ongoing legislative period would lose their seats.

Highlighting the preeminent role a small number of powerful families and clans play in Pakistan, Aftab Ahmad Shaikh² stated: *"These [most important] families are divided into these four or five parties. Half belong to the PPP the other half is with the ML. They are all related. They want to be in power. You have three facts, which play a role in Pakistan: 1. the political families, 2. the bureaucracy of Islamabad and 3. the army. The whole family is involved in the government or in the opposition, in the army, as judges. The power is divided into these three sectors and each is related to the other. Like that it is easy to plunder the country, to take the money and not to pay it back. When Sharif was in power he distributed the most valuable land to his VIPs."*

¹ Some years ago, the party decided to open itself also for non-Mohajir, i.e. not only for those who migrated after 1947 from India to Pakistan. Therefore, the name was changed 1997 into Mottahida Qaumi Movement.

² Aftab Ahmad Shaikh is Senator of the Mottahida Qaumi Movement and deputy convenor. He takes care of the general affairs of the party and is a Professor of Law at a college in Karachi. Karachi, January 2000.

Another important feature is the upper class dominance of the Pakistani parliament. PMs from the middle and the lower-middle classes constitute less than 5% of members of the national assembly. (see also Ch. 1.5.5.) In addition, political party organisations in Pakistan typically suffer from lack of finances. In contrast to most Western countries candidates of a party and electoral campaigns are not funded by the party but by the candidates themselves. In essence, the government and the national and regional assemblies are in fact only open to the rich. In recent times, the rural rich and feudal landowners who previously dominated the assemblies have increasingly been replaced by the urban rich and businessmen. Candidates for national office now need to spend an average of 20 mio. Rupees, which is the equivalent of 10,000 times the average annual income.

Due to the failure of the state to provide basic education and welfare, intermediary actors have become increasingly prominent. Many of them are financed by political and religious fundamentalist organisations, but also receive funding from dubious sources and through drug trade. This explains the phenomenon of the appearance of religious strongmen (e.g. the 'mullahs') in a rural society with a strong tradition of Sufism, which had been essential for the emergence of a very tolerant form of Islam in Southern Asia.

All parties do have a religious agenda, i.e. they are either Sunni or Shia, although only some parties do have an exclusively religious outlook and try to realise their religious school of thought. These 'religious' parties are typically very radical in their rhetoric and tend to dominate the public discourse on most relevant social issues. Certainly, since Pakistanis are generally quite religious, and the "wise men of Islam", the Mullahs and the Ulemahs wield "great moral power", religious parties remain very relevant political and social organisations. Nevertheless, when the former PML-government attempted to elevate the Sharia laws (Penal Code, Family Law, Tax System) to constitutional rank, allegedly in an effort to hold the fundamentalists at bay, it met with determined opposition and could not push the measure through. Moreover, on the political stage fundamentalist politicians are surprisingly weak and since they have consistently failed to get elected to the national parliament in significant numbers, they recently have resorted to electoral boycotts. Overall, there are five relevant political parties - two national (PPP, PML) and three regional parties (MQM, ANP, BNP) - and four important religious parties - three Sunni (JI, JUP, JUL) and one Shia (TJP).

For more detailed information on political parties read the Final Report of the Fifth UNHCR/ACCORD Country of Origin Information Workshop of 13-14 December 1999 in Bratislava. It can be downloaded at <http://www.ecoi.net/pub/ms66/Pakrep01.pdf> or ordered directly from the author under transcombajwa@pingnet.ch.

I. 3. Society

On 12 October 1999 the military once more took over power in Pakistan. Most interestingly, the coup d'état caused no general uproar amongst the people. Even the then-Vice-President of the ousted Muslim League, Ijaz-ul-Haq, son of late dictator Zia-ul-Haq, welcomed the army action: *"The country is in a critical situation and whatever decision the armed forces take, the nation has to support them on that, for the sake of the country"*. (The News, 14 Oct 1999) Ex-President Farooq Leghari told to the Urdu news-paper Daily Jang that *"the attitude of the previous rulers have converted the State into a fascist State"* and the Amir (leader) of the religious party Jamaat-e-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, stated that *"Nawaz Sharif has developed dictatorship in the country during his regime"* and that the army had saved the nation from a dictator. (Daily Jang, 16 Oct 1999) The international press commented: *"The most striking and lamentable feature of the military coup in Pakistan has been the absence of internal protest against it"*. (The Guardian, 15 Oct 1999)

Most experts observed that the population had just had enough of the politicians, who seemed to follow the maxime: "Ask not what you can do for your country, but what your country can do for you". Most of the party leaders had brought their money in time to a safe haven such as Swiss banks or real estates in the United Kingdom. The economic and social situation had, however, deteriorated dramatically in the past decade³:

- The poverty rate (percentage of the Pakistani population with a daily income of less than one US-Dollar) rose from more than 30 percent in 1989 to 36 percent in 1999
- The majority of the population, including three fourths of women, were illiterate and half the children of school-going age were not attending school
- The toll of ethnic and sectarian terrorism averaged close to 1000 persons killed every year
- Fundamentalist activism targeted liberalism of all kinds; armed religious groups attacked mosques, churches, temples and imam barghas
- Religious minorities were stalked, with Ahmadis being the prime victims.

I. 4. The Military

Immediately after the military took over power all political activities were banned. Kunwar Idris⁴ observed: *"Some of their leaders are incarcerated, some are facing accountability charges, and some others are on the run – in the underground or in exile. Generally there has not been much change in the prevalence and intensity of corruption but it has certainly diminished at the higher policy or political levels. At the moment, no general or minister in office is known to be corrupt. One helpful factor in bringing corruption down has been the absence of contracts and procurement deals because foreign aid/loans were stopped and the state treasury is empty"*. (Interview, 18 Sep 2000)

A very important political issue at the moment is the "devolution plan" (the so-called "grassroots democracy") which many politicians expect to destroy whatever autonomy or political importance the provinces possess. Already in August the offices of Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner - three pillars of a decentralised administration - were abolished and were replaced by a district coordination officer (DCO) who will coordinate the district administration which now consists of 12 groups of offices each headed by an executive district officer.

At the same time there will be also a police reform. The plan envisages the establishment of a National Public Safety Commission (NPSC) which will monitor the performance of the federal law enforcement agencies while the Provincial Public Safety Commission (PPSC) will be responsible for coordinating the functions of all public safety commissions within the province and also for evaluating their performance annually. (Dawn, 15 Aug 2000)

³ See complete text: "The legacy of the Nineties", foreword by Aziz Siddiqui, editor of "State of Human Rights in 1999", published by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, March 2000, www.hrcp.net.

⁴ Kunwar Idris served as an official of the Pakistani Government for the last 36 years in the superior administrative cadre. He also worked in the public, industrial and public banking sector. During the last 6 years he has been on the boards of some companies dealing with automobile and banking. He now presides over three to four boards but is not involved actively in the management. He also writes for Dawn, the biggest English-language newspaper in Pakistan.

In the field of human rights, the military government also decided to go ahead. During a two-day convention in April 2000 the military declared *"to take legal and administrative measures to promote human rights culture in Pakistan"*. (Dawn, 23 Apr 2000) Different ministers took part, including Derick Cyprian, who was at that time responsible for minority affairs but for 'personal reasons' had to resign from his post in August. Observers believe that the true reason for his resignation was that he had faced too much opposition from the Mullahs (conservative Muslim clerics). He was followed by a retired army officer, Colonel S.K. Tresslor, who stated in an interview with The Nation: *"Minorities in Pakistan enjoy complete religious freedom, we should exert ourselves in taking part in nation-building activities as a Pakistani and not as a minority. We must correct our thinking"*. (The Nation, 29 Aug 2000)

The press plays an important role in a democracy. In September 2000 in Hyderabad (Sindh) the police showed their 'concern' for the press when policemen tortured a press photographer for taking pictures of police Lathi-charge (attack with batons) on youth outside the venue of a concert of the Pakistani pop group Junoon. *"The photographer was caught by police personnel, who threw him into a mobile and started beating him up with sticks and rifle butts"*. (The News, 4 Sep 2000) Then he was kept in a police station where he was subjected to severe physical and mental torture. Meanwhile General Musharraf *"observed that the national press is totally free and the journalist community is free to express its view-point without any pressure"*. He went on to say that *"The present government believes in free and healthy criticism in national press, because the healthy and positive criticism in the press will provide a wide support in resolving different national and international issues as to mitigate the people's problems"*. (Dawn, 30 Sep 2000)

I. 5. Recent developments

I. 5.1. Crime, corruption and poverty

The Dawn reported in September that over the last 10 years 21,000 people were killed in Sindh province alone. Moreover 11,000 people were kidnapped, 19,000 dacoities took place and 73,000 vehicles were stolen or snatched away. In Karachi division 10,791 people were killed, 10,791 dacoities and robberies were committed, 3699 adults and 231 children were abducted and 66,257 vehicles were stolen. It is noteworthy that about 50,000 culprits, involved in various crimes, were still at large and declared as proclaimed offenders. (Dawn, 21 Sep 2000) Not only politicians and bureaucrats but also members of the army are facing accountability charges. Each year a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) shows the level of corruption in about 90 countries. *"The surveys embrace the perceptions of business people, the general public and country analysts. The surveys were undertaken over the last three years and no country is included in the CPI unless there are results from a minimum of three surveys"*. (The Nation, 18 Sep 2000) Some time ago Pakistan was the second most corrupt country after Nigeria. This year Nigeria again tops the list while Pakistan failed to submit any data, and is therefore not listed in the current CPI.

Poverty is a major problem in Pakistan. While the rich become richer, the poor become poorer. *"About 60,000 people, living in posh areas of 13 major cities of the country, have been listed as tax evaders following a survey conducted recently. These people, whose names had been put on watch-list, had declared their income below Rs150,000."*⁵ (Dawn, 24 Sep 2000). The government's new strategy, according to Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz, will reduce poverty. He stated that the administration has *"worked very closely with the World Bank to develop a viable strategy to attack*

⁵ Rs 150,000 equal US\$ 2,500.- or sFr 4,200.-

poverty." (Dawn, 15 Sep 2000) The final articulation of this strategy is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). *"The paper is a three-dimensional attack on poverty:*

- a) *providing opportunities to the poor through revival of growth mainly through the private sector [!] and exploitation of indigenous resources. Public sector support will focus on small public works programmes.*
- b) *Facilitating empowerment through devolution of power, reforms in the civil service, police and judiciary, and adoption of credible anti-corruption measures.*
- c) *Enhancing social security through the food support programme, micro-credit banks, revamping the Zakat system [money payed for the poor, one of the five pillars in Islam, Y.H.B.], and reforms in the pension system."* (Dawn, 15 Sep 2000)

While the Pakistani Finance Minister also observed that no single cause could explain the true condition of the poor, the World Bank's speaker John Wall, who is responsible for Afghanistan and Pakistan, analyzed the country's situation as follows: *"The performance of successive governments in Pakistan had been disappointing due to bad governance that ultimately increased poverty in the country. [He] said that Pakistan's total budgetary resources were 15 per cent of the GDP. Out of this, 5pc goes into civil administration, 4pc to defence and the rest to debt servicing. And (therefore) nothing is left for development purposes".* (Dawn, 14 Sep 2000) Consequently, the revenues had to be increased. According to IMF officials, it would be of highest priority to the government to put Pakistan's economic house in order while *"Kashmir, accountability and grassroot democracy could wait for the time being."* (Dawn, 3 Sep 2000)

At the end of September 2000 the IMF agreed to give Pakistan a US\$ 650 million medium-term loan after Pakistan accepted to have a market-based exchange rate of the Rupee (free flotation). The Pakistani State Bank, however, had to intervene to halt the Dollar rise in the Inter-bank market. (Dawn 20 Sep 2000) During the last week of September the rupee fell from 54.93 to 60 to 1 US Dollar. Nevertheless, the IMF voiced optimism at the meeting in Prague *"on chances of reaching an accord by the end of the year to resume financial assistance to Pakistan. Speaking at a joint press conference at the World Bank and IMF press centre, the IMF deputy managing director, Eduardo Aninat, said that he was encouraged by the recent contacts between the Fund and Pakistan authorities."* (Dawn, 28 Sep 2000) Likewise, the Asian Development Bank stated its readiness to give US\$ 800 million for three projects such as the Micro Finance Bank, a capital market development loan and a rural/urban development program. The most important fact is that there is no money for the development of the country – no development in the field of education or health. And the free flotation of the Rupee exacerbates the economic hardship of the poor even further.

I. 5.2. Talibanising Pakistan?

In August 2000, members of the Pakistani Taliban set ablaze a house where a private musical performance had been held 10 days before. The same day, Pakistani Taliban were beaten up for trying to stop a soccer match in Landikotal near Peshawar. *"Hundreds of tribesmen thrashed a group of Pakistani Taliban after they tried to halt a soccer match on the plea that the players kits were against the dress code of Islam. Several people were injured when more than 100 Taliban forced their way into a sports stadium, demanding that the match be abandoned."* (NNI, 20 Aug 2000)

The Taliban present themselves as the "true Muslims". The Pakistani Taliban intend to introduce the same kind of Islam that is being enforced by their brothers in Afghanistan. This particular brand of Islam, very similar to the one found in Saudi Arabia, would e.g. forbid women and girls to go out of their houses without a male family member, to attend schools or universities and to work - with the exception of the WFP bakeries - outside their own homes. Furthermore, the use of music would be banned, the display of images of living beings prohibited and everyone would be obliged to go to the mosque for prayers five times a day. Although the Holy Koran⁶ explicitly states that there is no compulsion in the question of religion the Taliban and other Muslim extremists fervently attempt to promote their own concept of Islam. In addition, it is well known that the Taliban earn large amounts of money by selling hard drugs which they use to finance their war against opposition groups in Afghanistan. Confronted with this fact, Mullah Mohammad Omar, the "Amir-ul-Momeneen", Supreme Leader of the Muslims in Afghanistan, simply answered: *"The use of opium is unlawful in Islam but selling it is allowed"*. (US News and World Report, 3 Jun 1995)

The vocal role radical Islamists play in Pakistani politics and society has a long tradition in Pakistan. Under Z.A. Bhutto the Pakistani army and intelligence services already started to help Mullah-type (religious extremist) leaders in Afghanistan. Pakistan was to become the most important training centre for the Taliban in their fight against the Soviet invasion and later to take over power. Dictator Zia-ul-Haq as well as the democratically elected Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif governments continued to logistically and politically support the efforts of the Taliban to achieve and maintain political and military control in Afghanistan. It is important to note, however, that during the tenure of Zia ul Haq the USA and the West also gave a lot of money to partisan fighters to keep the Red Army out of Afghanistan. At that time the Mujaheddin were 'useful' to the West and the western mass media typically displayed them as heroic "freedom fighters". After 1989, the Mujaheddin soon became so-called Islamic terrorists, who were to be despised and feared.

"The successive governments of Pakistan and our military leadership bear major responsibility for spawning, popularising and for providing physical power to the particular expulsionary ideological stance of the Taliban and playing a critical role in creating conditions that destroyed the old Afghan society gave rise to the Taliban supremacy. It was Pakistan that brought the Taliban in power in Afghanistan. Is Pakistan going to continue with the policies of the past and end up Talibanising itself?" (The Nation, 3 Aug 2000) For the leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Maulana Fazlur Rahman the statement of US Assistance Secretary of State for South Asia, Karl Inderfurth, *"calling the Taliban a threat to Pakistan and others is baseless, disguising and malicious. He added that the Taliban are only a threat to the USA and its mala fide intentions. The Islam practised in Pakistan is not different from the one that is practised in Afghanistan. We have no concept of militancy in Islam, except against cruelty and injustice. The Taliban are acting according to the injunction of Islam, a fact not liked by the US"* (The News, 3 Sep 2000). For the columnist of the Pakistani daily The Nation the only way to stop the Talibanisation of Pakistan is that Pakistani governments should emancipate themselves from the pressure of radical Muslim leaders and *"the [Pakistani] intelligence services should cease to advise the insecure governments, elected as well as unelected, on the lines of the last three decades, to keep on yielding to threats posed by the traditional conservative elements."* (The Nation, 3 Sep 2000)

⁶ "There shall be no compulsion in religion, for guidance and error have been clearly distinguished; then whoso rejects those who hinder people from following the right path and believes in Allah, has surely taken hold of a strong and dependable support which will never break. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (The Holy Quran, Sura 2, verse 257)

I. 5.3. "No room for democracy in an Islamic country" or the role of the so-called Islamic parties and organisations

In the concept of Islam of the Mullahs there is no place for democracy; in fact, there is no place for anyone who has another concept than the one accepted by them. Mullah Sufi Muhammad, chief of the Tehrik Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (Organisation for the Introduction of the Islamic Shariat Law) said: *"There is no room for democracy in Islam and those struggling for restoration of this system in an Islamic country should not be considered as followers of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)."* (The News, 9 Sep 2000) Fazlur Rahman, the chief of the powerful Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, strongly condemned the "district government system" by Gen. Musharraf. Fazlur Rahman's sometimes bizarre logic is reflected in his comments on calls for human rights by Western countries: *"Giving a worldly example, he said the Muslims recognise and respect the holy books of Christians and Jews and also name their children after Esa [Jesus], Musa [Moses], Mariam but they (non-Muslims) not only do not respect our holy book Quran but never name their children as Muhammad, Omar, Ali or Aisha"*. (Millat, 3 Sep 2000)

When the Musharraf regime announced its plan to hold elections in December 2000 there was widespread criticism by conservative religious leaders. However, ideology may not be the only motivation for the Mullahs to condemn democracy and elections: Most religious parties did not take part in the last elections because they would rather give up their seats in parliament under protest (as a result of their electoral boycott) than lose them in democratic elections. Strikingly enough, only two per cent of voters had opted for these parties in the previous elections. Therefore, the Mullahs cannot expect much good from elections and democratic processes. Freedom of opinion and expression is not highly valued by extremist leaders. After taking over Kabul in 1996, the Taliban systematically destroyed video tapes and TVs; in September 2000, the Urdu newspaper Millat showed pictures of enraged Pakistani Muslims who burned their TVs in protest against the broadcasts of the cable networks and the obscenity shown in the government media and on Pakistani television. (Millat, 8 Sep 2000)

The biggest danger emanating from religio-political parties is the threat of terrorism against those who have a different understanding of Islam or who belong to another religion. Most people are extremely cautious and do not dare to criticize the actions of the Mullahs out of fear of being the next ones on their hit list. *"Political parties had lost their political wisdom due to which the political vacuum was being filled by those forces who believe in gun and force"*. (The Frontier Post, 2 Sep 2000)

The Anti-Nazi activist Reverend Martin Niemöller once said⁷:

"In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."

What is certainly missing in Pakistan today is the civil courage to speak up against terror from political and religious parties.

Big hopes were put in the Pakistani Army, which seemed to be an alternative to what had been happening before. However, even the army had to adopt a more cautious approach in face of the street power of the Mullahs. One symbolic incident may

⁷ There are a number of different versions of the well-known statement attributed to Pastor Martin Niemöller. However, the central message remains the same: If you look away and don't speak up against injustice and terror, ultimately you will become a victim yourself.

highlight this change of attitude. In the beginning, Gen. Musharraf stated that he liked Kemal Ataturk – a man who had eliminated clerics from all power positions in the Turkish state. When he returned last year from a visit to Turkey, however, Musharraf had to take his comments back in response to fervent protests by the fundamentalists. Later, when he returned from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan's moneylender, Pakistan's new leader already had a new vision – that of Allama Iqbal, the great and pronouncedly Islamic Pakistani poet. At the moment, it seems that the military is silent against fundamentalism and it seems also *"that a compromise is being made with fundamentalists at political and government level."* (The Frontier Post, 2 Sep 2000)

The conflict between the different religious groups had started again shortly after the government was topped by the military. Asma Jahangir, ex-chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said when asked what the general situation is like and if there is going to be a change: *"My assessment is that there will be some small changes but in the long run army dictatorships always damaged the country. Not that they have never brought anything good but it is normally only something small. The question now are the people's rights. Here there can't be any compromise. I hope they will see that we are not in the 1960s or 1980s. It is another era where armies don't have the knowledge to run a country. We have to return to democracy. Of course I am not saying that we had a fully functioning democracy. But it was a process, which now has been stopped. We don't know where the present situation is going to take us. There is no other option for us than to start with this process and every time it is interrupted we are thrown back many years. They [the fundamentalists] are desperate, especially after Clinton's visit. They are agitated. They don't know if they will survive. They don't know what the government is going to do – to strike at them or to protect them as it did earlier. Or is it [the new regime] going to show the world that it attacks them but under the surface protects them. This insecurity has been transferred into aggression. They have an attitude like the militia in East Timor, when they said we will leave but with us we will take many of you. Look at the press, which is controlled by them. It has become so insulting."* (Interview given on 9 Apr 2000 in Bern, Switzerland).

I. 5.4. Kashmir - a national problem

"On 1 January 1948, the government of India to intervene in the Kashmir dispute called upon the UN Security Council. The Council, after protracted and difficult negotiations, secured an agreement between India and Pakistan that the future of Jammu and Kashmir would be decided through a free and impartial plebiscite to be held under the auspices of the UN. The underlying principle of all resolutions... is the rights of self-determination, to be exercised by the people of Kashmir through a plebiscite. However, the proposed plebiscite entails the option of joining either India or Pakistan." ("Terror in Indian held Kashmir", South Asian Studies – IV, by Shaheen Akhtar, Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, 1993, p.17, <www.irs.org.pk>) Brig. Bashir Ahmad, who is in charge of the above-mentioned institute, said that Kashmir has become more important and that the fundamentalists have also become increasingly involved. (Interview 9 Sep 2000)

The Indian columnist Khushwant Singh said during a speech in Karachi: *"You are right. India would never allow a plebiscite in Kashmir even though it had made a promise in the United Nations."* (Dawn, 31 Mar 2000) The option given to the Kashmiris in 1948 was to choose either India or Pakistan – but today they would vote for self-determination. In Singh's view both countries are treating Kashmir as a property which has to be divided. *"It is not a question of real estate. Rather it's a question of a people. Neither India nor Pakistan take into account what the Kashmiris need or want."* Syed Nazir Gilani, general-secretary of the Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights mentioned (Interview 1997 in London) that none of the groups opting for either India,

Pakistan or independence represent a majority of the Kashmiri people. The Kashmiris therefore have to be involved in the peace negotiations and they have to be a part of the solution. Because a majority of Kashmiris are Muslims Pakistan and the Pakistanis will always see it as an obligation to help "their brothers and sisters". With this psychological background it can be understood why during the last 52 years none of the Pakistani governments was able to find a solution to this problem. Also under Gen. Musharraf the Kashmir conflict is not likely to be solved. The Federal Information Minister Jabbar said that it would not be possible for Pakistan to curtail its defence budget even if it was able to resolve the Kashmir problem because it was located next to a hostile country which had been expanding its territory right from its inception. (Dawn, 31 Mar 2000)

Thus, instead of building schools and hospitals the government will continue to build up atom bombs and other destructive means. How could this problem be solved? In Kunwar Idris's own vision Pakistan should try to become member of the South Asian Association. This could not further trade and economic cooperation between the member states but also enhance the chances for a durable solution to the long standing conflict between India and Pakistan. *"They have gone to war for at least three times. But they were not able to resolve their political problems, which essentially centres on the question of Kashmir. We should now change the approach, and economic co-operation is needed. First we should trade with each other, try to integrate the region. Out of that, goodwill and economic relationship there will resolve a desire to solve also the political problems. For the last 52 years the political approach hasn't worked out. For the last 52 years we are spending much money on defence. We have tried to trade with countries from the other parts of the world. But to be an economic block our economies should complement each other, it should be compact and an overland trade should be possible. That would be possible only when Pakistan became part of the South Asian Region. We could save a lot of money. [...] The government of Pakistan is saying that it is not possible to have economical relation with India as long as the Kashmir problem is not solved. I think we can have this relation while we continue to resolve the Kashmir problem. Out of this mutual interest will emerge a solution of the Kashmir conflict which will be acceptable for all parties."* (Interview, January 2000) Hitting a similar vein, Gen. Musharraf stated during a trip to Indonesia in March 2000 that Kashmir was ruining the economy of Pakistan. (Dawn, 31 Mar 2000)

I. 5.5. Recent political developments⁸

Starting in December 2000, with the third phase completed in May 2001, the military has been holding multi-stage elections of local governments which are held on partyless basis with the minorities following a separate electorate system. This was already once introduced by Zia-ul-Haq with big success – he remained in power from 1977 until he died in an aircraft crash in 1988.

In the HRCP Newsletter of January 2001, the editor Kamila Hyat commented: *"The first phase of the process of polls for local bodies in the country is complete. [...] [The] results in themselves cast grave doubts on quite what the exercise has attained. There are no signs that the 'new leadership' promised by the military regime has emerged, with traditional power groups widely dominating the election. In the absence of any clear determination of what powers, or what finances, are to be made available to the councils, confusion continues to hang over both issues. The announcement in late January [2001] of further changes in the devolution plan reflects that this confusion remains a great deal of uncertainty as to how far the plan will succeed in offering any real devolution power to lower administrative tiers. The concept of grassroots*

⁸ For persecution of political activists please see Ch. 2.4.

democracy, in the absence of elected governments at the national and provincial levels, too remains a seriously flawed one". (HRCP Newsletter, Jan 2001, p. 2)

It is important to note that the minorities were obliged to vote separately, resulting in a very low minority voter turnout. Most interestingly, qualifications for candidates and elected officials included besides a) Pakistani citizenship, b) minimum age of 25 years, c) voter registration in the electoral roll of the relevant ward, also d) a good character, adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings or in case of non-Muslims, a good reputation, and e) an academic qualification of no less than matriculation (10 years of school) or secondary school certificate.

Given that primary school enrolment is a mere 62 % and the adult literacy rate is about 38 %, these requirements exclude the vast majority of Pakistani citizens from eligibility for an elected political office. (see also Ch. 1.3.) Even some of the already very few former elected officials from the lower and middle classes may not meet the new eligibility criteria: *"Kausar Parveen, 40, resident of Khursheed Abad at Jhang Road in Mazaffargarh city was a woman candidate on a labour seat from union council 35. She is married with three children. She speaks Seraiki and is illiterate. [...] She said she faced no difficulty in filing her nomination papers and that the returning officer did not question her. [...] Kausar said she did not know what powers she will have as councillor. 'The government will give us (money), and we will distribute (it) among the people,' she said". (HRCP Newsletter, Jan 2001, p. 14)*

II. SPECIFIC GROUPS AT RISK

II. 1. General Situation

During last year's general meeting of Amnesty International in Bern (9 Apr 2000), Asma Jahangir emphasized that the worst cases of persecution in Pakistan affected women and religious minorities. Referring to the October 1999 coup and its consequences for religious minorities Jahangir observed that typically a change of government causes a certain marginal relief. In the case of Pakistan the relief is that at least on the outset the government is not against these groups. Nevertheless, blasphemy cases are being registered and those accused are either imprisoned or forced to give up their former lives and run away. All in all, there have been no serious attempts to protect religious minorities nor has there been a fundamental improvement of their situation.

II. 2. Women and Children

The biggest changes in the situation of women occurred in the 1980s. This was not so much because the authorities intended to take relevant measures but rather because the Pakistani women themselves had decided to become active. At the beginning of the 1980s the first women's organisations started to work. Asma Jahangir remembered: *"We were the women the people laughed upon, nobody took us serious."* (Bern, 9 Apr 2000) The women were not very well organised but they showed their will to initiate change. The majority of the people did not believe in equal rights for women and attempts were made to attack the integrity of women activists like Jahangir and to split the women's organisations. Another strategy was to forego the women's criticism by adopting some insubstantial reforms.

Concerning the current situation Asma Jahangir suggested: *"We have to do more intellectual work and make our ideas clearer. Now the military government has started to talk about women's rights. They pick and choose some rights, which they are going to give us. This is very dangerous. They think that a part of the women's organisations will accept their offer. We have to talk about the whole package"*. Women in Pakistan live in fear. *"They face death by shooting, burning or killing with axes if they are deemed to have brought shame on the family. They are killed for supposed 'illicit' relationships, for marrying men of their choice, for divorcing abusive husbands. They are even murdered by their kin if they are raped as they are thereby deemed to have brought shame on their family. The truth of the suspicion does not matter – merely allegation is enough to bring dishonour on the family and therefore justifies the slaying."* (HRCP Newsletter, Vol. X, Number 4, Oct. 1999, p.20).

As a consequence of widespread poverty, the ongoing importance of the agricultural sector and the feudal structure of Pakistani society child labour is very common. Since the issue of child labour is rather regarded as non-ideological, the promotion of children's rights and an improvement of their situation are not unrealistic. The fact that the previous government had started to take measures in this direction supports this view. Based on the assumption that a reform of the education system is central for a decrease of child labour, and given that the effects of such a reform will only be felt in several years, everything depends on how long the current government will stay in power.

II. 3. Religious Minorities

II. 3.1. Ahmadis

Today most Islamic religious groups base their faith on the Quran and on the principle that 'after Muhammad, there is no other prophet to come' who will reform Islam. The approximately 1.5 mio Ahmadis - 500.000 are estimated to actually practise their faith -, however, despite sharing the five pillars of Islam with all other Muslims (73 Sunni and several Shia sects in Pakistan), do believe that their founder Ahmad is a prophet like Jesus, who came without bringing a new law. The Pakistani parliament under Z.A. Bhutto declared Ahmadis to be non-Muslim in 1974, and outlawed them practising Islam, since only Muslims are allowed to observe the Islamic faith. Accordingly, quoting the Quran and performing the same rituals by non-believers would be mockery and blasphemy. Nevertheless, Ahmadis lived on and could still perform their prayers without fear of severe sanctions until 1984, when parliament passed another ordinance to the Penal Code (295c) which made it possible for judges to sentence persons to death who were found guilty of certain blasphemy charges. According to I.A. Rehman, HRCP, the blasphemy law is used mostly against Ahmadis and less so against Christians. Against members of the majority only very few blasphemy charges have been filed.

Article 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code:

"Any person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves ,Ahmadis' or by any other name), who directly or indirectly, poses himself as a Muslim, or calls, or refers to, his faith as Islam, or preaches or propagates his faith, or invites others to accept his faith, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine".

Article 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code:

*"295-C. Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet.-
Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine".*

After the coup, the constitution was annulled with the exception of the anti-Ahamadi laws. An attempt by Gen. Musharraf to introduce a provision which would have required the Deputy District Commissioner to first check a blasphemy charge and to only then decide to register the case met with the fierce opposition of the Mullahs and organised street protests. Very quickly Gen. Musharraf withdrew his proposal and decided to leave matters as they were.

II. 3.2. Ahmadis - recent developments⁹

"Ahmadis remain the most reviled group in Pakistan, hated by members of every level of society – the rabid and single-minded anti-Ahmadi movement Anjuman-i-Khatm-i-Nabuwat [KTN] counts even President Rafiq Tarrar in its membership." (Friday Times, Among the Ahmadis, by Tyler Schnoebelen, 1-7 Sep 2000)

⁹ please also Amnesty International: Country Report Pakistan: Insufficient protection of religious minorities, 15 May 2001

According to the Mullahs, Ahmadis do have a hand in every national crisis and work in a consorted espionage effort on behalf of the "Jews" and the CIA. For instance, when a prominent Mullah of the KTN, Ludhianvi, was killed in September, Daily Ummat (Karachi Urdu newspaper) wrote that Ahmadis were behind the killing. The leaders of different religious parties *"claimed that the Qadianis were busy in false propaganda against Pakistan using the Internet and international media in which they were portraying that they were being victimised. They said that the US State Department, by virtue of the Qadiani propaganda, was targeting Pakistan and including it in the countries where the situation of human rights is worst."* (The Nation, 7 Sep 2000)

According to the Urdu press the *"Jamiat head utters determination to fight off Qadiyaniat."* (Millat, 8 Sep 2000) Another report (The News, 9 Sep 2000) specified that JI leader *"Noorani warns against Qadianis' activities. The Chief of the World Islamic Mission, Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani Siddiqui, has warned that the government must beware the 'conspiracies' being hatched by the role of 'Qadianis' and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), that, he claimed were patronising negative elements. In his message read out at the Khatm-e-Nabuwwat Conference [...] Noorani said that these designs were, in fact, a product of Zionist forces."* The World Islamic Mission is very active all over Europe and has good relations with other militant organisations. Khatm-e-Nabuwwat, Idara Minhaj-ul-Quran and World Islamic Mission are working hand in hand in their propaganda against Ahmadis. In many European countries Urdu pamphlets with calls to kill Ahmadis were distributed during the year 2000 and literature against Ahmadis is distributed freely in Pakistani food shops.

1. An incident reported by the London-based Ahmadiyya Muslim Association may serve as a good example for the way in which Ahmadis are scapegoated: Sarai Sidhu, District Khanewal, 17 Aug 2000: Unknown perpetrators murdered a member of the militant organisation Sipā-e-Sahāba (whose members are well known for killing Ahmadis and Shia-Muslims) while he was asleep at home. Three Ahmadis were arrested and brought to a police station where they were physically tortured. The police managed to extract a forced confession from Ashfaq Ahmad, an 18-year-old youth, who could not take anymore beating from the police officials. The police, in collusion with the Mullahs, surrounded the village in order to stop any Ahmadi Muslim trying to leave the village. After extracting a supposedly false confession from Ahmad, police took him to his own house and demanded that the weapon that had been used should be produced. Ahmad gave them an old rusty axe, which was lying in the house but the police officers were not satisfied and they started again to torture him. Then the police took him and other Ahmadis to the house of the killed Sipā-e-Sahāba member in order to have their footmarks at the place of the incident and took them back to the police station. In the meantime they brought police dogs to the scene of the crime which took up the scent of the accused from the place of murder and led them to the houses of the accused Ahmadis. In this way the police itself concocted the evidence of the involvement of the Ahmadis in the murder case. (Information by Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, UK, Press and Publication Desk [Central], AM no. 734, 18 Sep 2000)

2. *"Another illustration of the establishment's vulnerability to anti-Ahmadi pressure was the change of the name of Rabwah. Soon after independence the Ahmadiyya community had paid for and leased from the Punjab government a barren, deserted piece of land to settle its members there. Over the years this developed into a busy town mostly of Ahmadi residents and as home to the community's headquarters. It was named Rabwah, an Arabic word occurring in the Holy Quran and meaning 'a raised ground', which the place was. Suddenly, the anti-Ahmadi sections decided that the name should be changed. There was no provocation for this, except apparently spite: the Ahmadis should be denied the name that had universally become associated with them. A resolution was then moved in the Punjab assembly, and with just about a quarter of the members present and voting it was adopted. The Ahmadis themselves*

were of course never consulted even for appearance's sake. Several new names were debated, such as Siddiqabad, Mustafabad and Chak Dhagian. Finally it was proposed to call it Nawan Qadian [New Qadian], Qadian in India being the place where Ahmadis were concentrated before partition. This was duly notified early in the year. But soon some potential of mischief was seen in that too, and it was decided that the name should be even more non-evocative, such as Chenabnagar. So within less than a fortnight the governor had to issue a second notification, changing the name yet again." (HRCP, State of Human Rights in 1999, p.120)

3. Rangpur, near Sialkot, 11 Jun 2000: An Ahmadi, Malik Hussain, went to his house which was rented out. When he arrived there, accompanied by his son, a mob beat them up. The son escaped and reported to the police who came and helped to release his father from his assailants. Subsequently Malik Hussain reported to a doctor who produced a medical certificate that mentioned all the injuries that he received. Escorted by a number of friends, Malik went to the police station and asked a case to be registered against the perpetrators. The police refused to register the complaint and advised Hussain to forget it all and to go away. They also told him that the attackers had planned to kill him. (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, UK, Press and Publication Desk [Central]: Persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan, Newsreport – June 2000)

4. "On October 30, five members of the Ahmadi community of Ghatyalian village in Tehsil Pasrur, District Sialkot, were indiscriminately shot down with automatic weapons shortly after morning prayers at their place of worship. [...] Following the offering of morning prayers at 5:25 a.m. a group of about 25 people attended a lecture on the Quran. At the conclusion of the lecture, a child took the copy of the Quran from my hand [Mushtaq Ahmed Tanha narrates], and as people were beginning to rise, a young man rushed into the room, closely followed by two men armed with kalashnikovs. In the indiscriminate firing that ensued from the doorstep of the room, victims were left with head, abdomen and back injuries as they attempted to sit or duck bullets". (HRCP Newsletter, Jan 2001)

5. A report in the same newsletter titled "Action of clergyman lead to five Ahmadi deaths in Takht Hazara" deals with an incident very similar to the one in Ghatyalian. This time on 11 November 2000, after the evening prayer the place of Ahmadi worship was attacked, with five Ahmadis getting killed and the worship place being set on fire. Most curiously, several Ahmadis have been accused and arrested. A few weeks after the attack, "to placet the mullah, authorities charged numerous Ahmadis; five of the arrested were the main complainant and witnesses in the bloody assault. On February 15 [2001], the Additional Session Judge, Sargodha rejected the victims' plea for release on bail. They remain in jail". (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, UK, Press and Publication Desk [Central]: Persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan, Newsreport – February 2001).

The Urdu press plays a vital role in the campaign of hatred. Apparently, the Mullahs can publish more or less what they want, while the Ahmadiyya Community is denied the opportunity to respond. Many of their publications are banned. The only medium which could not be controlled till now is the Muslim Ahmadiyya TV satellite channel which is broadcasting a 24-hours programme. Please find below exemplary anti-Ahmadi articles from the Urdu press:

"Plan to establish a Qadiani State is finalized in London. The Qadiani State will comprise Sialkot, Shakargarh and Gurdaspur [!] areas". (The Daily Nawa-i-Waqat, Lahore, 1 Feb 2001) [Note: Gurdaspur is situated in India and not in Pakistan.]

"Stay vigilant against those who are critical of the Blasphemy provisions. Every believer should be ever ready to play the role of Ghazi IIm Din Dhaheed to defend the honour of the Prophet". (Justice Nazir Akhtar, in: The Daily Nawa-i-Waqat, Lahore, 5 Feb 2001)

"The Government should take notice of anti-Pakistan and anti-Islam activities of Qadianis and Americans". (Maulana Chinioti, in: The Daily Jang, Lahore, 12 Feb 2001)

"Qadianis will be persued even if they reach the moon". (Maulana Nomani, in: The Daily Khabrain, Lahore, 18 Feb 2001)

"The Dogma of Khatam-e-Nabuwwat [i.e. there will be no prophet after Muhammad, Y.H.B.] is protected by law and laity. Muslims can sacrifice all for this belief". (President Tarar, in: The Daily Jang, 19 Feb 2001)

"Jihad will continue till Dooms day. Qadianis are enemies of Islam and Islamic countries". (Maulana Masud Azar, in: The Daily Jang, Lahore, 27 Feb 2001)

"This is the time to finish off Qadianiyat". (Molvi Allah Yar Arshad, in: The Daily Pakistan, Lahore, 28 Feb 2001)

In most cases the authorities are actively involved in the persecution of Ahmadis. This holds true not only for Punjab or Sindh but also for Azad Kashmir and other provinces. There is the impression that Gen. Musharraf, the new strongman in Pakistan, is bowing to the pressure of the Mullahs. Civil courage or public outrage in favour of Ahmadis are nowhere to be seen. If someone wants to discredit a person he simply calls him an Ahmadi - even Gen. Musharraf was accused of being Ahmadi in order to damage his reputation. Consequently, Gen. Musharraf has in general been very cautious in his approach towards the Mullahs who appear to be only waiting for the current regime to make a mistake (such as implementing reforms in favour of religious minorities) which would give them a pretext for mobilising mass protests to undermine the governments legitimacy.

II. 3.3. Christians - recent developments

"Instances of intolerance against Christians included their implication in blasphemy cases, violence against their churches and private lands, their harassment and discrimination against them by police, municipal officials and members of the majority community." (State of Human Rights in 1999, HRCP, p.122) Frater Bonnie Mendes of Idara-e-Amn-o-Insaf (a Christian Human Rights organisation) observed that "Christians have always been at the receiving end, and any little favour, any little privilege, they have always rejoiced over that. The very fact that Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf mentioned the religious minorities in his first speech has come as a pleasant surprise." (Interview, 8 Mar 2000)

There was some hope in the Christian communities when Gen. Musharraf visited St. Patrick's High School. According to Fr. Mendes, after the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Gen. Musharraf is the only one who has really gone out of the way in his speech, by way of talking of citizens beyond the Muslims. At the heart of the problem lies the separate electorate system which divides voters into sects, by religion, by race/ethnicity, by provinces - thus promoting sectarianism. Since minorities only vote for candidates of their own minority group they have become irrelevant for any other political party (PPP or PML). Marginalised as they are they wield no political clout whatsoever. *"This amounts to a religious apartheid political order. For almost 40 years a joint electorate was the norm, until Zia replaced it with a separate electorate. The supreme irony is that he did not take this step to protect the rights of the religious minorities but because of the pressure from the extremist religious parties to whom Zia*

was beholden for lending support to legitimise his rule.” (Group Captain (Rtd) Cecil Chaudhry, of the Pakistan Air Force, member of PAD, Pakistanis for Peace and Alternative Development, Press Conference on 20 June 2000)

What are the expectations of the Christian community after the *côup d'état*? Fr. Mendes: *“I think, anybody would be better than Nawaz Sharif. I would expect some improvements but I am hoping that they will really change the curriculum and they would really promote media tolerance, that will have a long lasting impact.”* He also pointed out that at the moment the atmosphere where people would be accused of blasphemy is not there in the country for the last few months. Gen. Musharraf has now appointed Col. (R) S. K. Tressler, a Christian military man, Minister for Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs who assured the public that *“Minorities in Pakistan **enjoy complete religious freedom...**”* However, in view of a blasphemy law which is still being enforced and used primarily against Ahmadis but also against Christians, the question remains which groups then fall into the category of those minorities, who “enjoy complete religious freedom”.

The USA quite openly criticise the blasphemy provisions and the current state of affairs regarding Christians in Pakistan: *“The operation of the blasphemy law is critically examined in a dispatch from Lahore published here on Saturday which seeks to draw attention to the condition of the Christian minority in Pakistan.*

The dispatch, carried on the front page of The Washington Times from one of its correspondents, claims that Christians in the country face an uneasy future as the growing religious fervour of its overwhelmingly Muslim majority promotes attacks on all minorities, with Christians especially vulnerable.

It quotes a senior State Department official as saying: “The United States is concerned about the situation of religious minorities in Pakistan. We are concerned about abuse of blasphemy laws and concerned that Gen Pervez Musharraf appeared to abandon an effort to reform those laws in the face of opposition. This is a serious problem.” (Dawn, 9 Oct 2000)

II. 3.4. Shiites - recent developments

HRCP reports that over one hundred persons were killed in Sunni-Shiite clashes during 1999. The figure was down from 1998, but the momentum of the year had continued through the best part of 1999. Only after the take over by the military the different groups vanished and were in a waiting position because nobody knew how the army would react against armed groups. Much hope was laid in the army by the common people but at the beginning of the year 2000 bombs started to blast again. *“Fourteen people were killed and 30 others injured when terrorists lobbed three hand-grenades and opened fire with Kalashnikovs at an Imambargah [prayer house of the Shiites], some 134km from Rawalpindi. There were conflicting reports about the attack. Eyewitnesses said those moments before the attack a flame-thrower was used from the other side of the street where the Imambargah was located. They alleged that the hand-grenades were thrown from a mosque” (Dawn, 13 Apr 2000).* The situation has calmed down this year but sectarian violence has not disappeared. Sectarian hatred has built up over the course of the last 10-15 years it is very unlikely to disappear simply with a change of government.

II. 4. Political activists

Initially after the army takeover the political parties kept a low profile. When Nawaz Sharif was convicted, however, there were a number of bomb blasts all over the country. While at first it was generally assumed that supporters of Nawaz Sharif were responsible for these incidents, and some claimed that India had its hand in the bombing, later rumours spread that the army itself had done it to discredit the Muslim League. Ultimately, no certainty could be achieved as to who was behind the explosions.

The situation for political activists has changed to the worse because the government officially bans all political activities. Even now, the army is still searching for members of all parties because of corruption and loan defaulting. Corruption has diminished at the higher policy or political levels but not at the police stations where now one has to bribe not only the police but also the army members. Furthermore, the conflict between all political parties continues, with activists and members of one party accusing and registering criminal cases against supporters and politicians of another party.

II. 4.1. MQM

In October 1999, the deputy convenor of the MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement), Aftab Sheikh, met the Sindh home secretary to discuss the issue of arrested workers of the MQM. *"The intensity of the arrests has decreased but the policy is still the same. Still members of the MQM are hunted. There are lists with the names of our people who should be arrested. In the police stations still the people are asked to pay huge bribes"* (Interview in January 2000). *"The home secretary, a retired brigadier, has been appointed chairman of a three-member panel formed by the federal government on a complaint of the MQM. The MQM had been complaining of extra-judicial killings of a large number of party workers and sympathisers since 1992, including 28 killed during the governor's rule in Sindh from 1998 to October 12, 1999, and arrest of party supporters"* (Dawn, 1 October 2000).

Throughout April 2001 there were reports on arrests of MQM activists and leaders. On 20 April 2001, after raiding his houses in Karachi and Hyderabad and police arrested MQM leaders Aftab Sheikh and Abdus Sattar Ansari outside the Sindh High Court. *"Mr Shaikh and Mr Ansari, accompanied by workers and supporters of the MQM, addressed a press conference in the cafeteria on the High Court premises. They said the MQM, with the support of the Jiye Sindh Qaumi Mahaz, had protested peacefully against water shortage in Sindh, but the government had used force to crush their protest. After the press conference as Mr Shaikh and Mr Ansari came out of the court premises, police arrested them. Both the leaders voluntarily surrendered to police. [...] Shaikh Liaquat Husain, a member of the MQM's co-ordination committee, has been detained for 90 days under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance. He was arrested in his Khudadad Colony house late on Wednesday night. According to the district magistrate's order, on the basis of information by the SSP East and other sources, the activities of Shaikh Liaquat Husain were likely to disturb peace in the city, so with a view to preventing him from acting in a manner prejudicial to public safety and maintenance of public order in District East it was expedient to take preventive action against him."* (Dawn, 21 Apr 2001)

One day before, on 19 April 2001 *"About 100 workers of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement and the Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz were rounded up in a major crackdown here late on Tuesday night. The crackdown was launched to arrest those workers of the MQM and the JSQM who were said to be wanted in different cases. Most of those rounded up have not been shown arrested officially by the police for "inexplicable" reasons.*

The arrests followed a protest rally by the MQM and the JSQM in the city against the water shortage on April 16 and a province-wide strike call given by the two parties to protest against the water shortage, use of batons against their workers and leaders outside the Karachi press club and the arrests of several other workers the same day.

The police officials were said to have prepared some lists of known MQM and JSQM activists to be rounded up in the crackdown. These lists have been given to each police station of the city and Latifabad and Qasimabad sub-divisions with strict directives by the Hyderabad SSP to arrest those named in the lists. The lists were said to have been prepared in the light of previous police record, with reference to old FIRs, which had not been not disposed of by the police.

There are innumerable complaints by the relatives of the activists that the police have made proxy arrests and misbehaved with the womenfolk. This correspondent met some of those arrested, who were government servants and were picked up in lieu of their sons and brothers. They requested not to be named because of fear of the police, and complained that when they had not paid bribe to the police, they had been booked under section 109 of the CrPC. Some people were detained or arrested when they visited different police stations to have their sons or relatives released.

The houses of the leaders of the MQM and JSQM were raided without any search warrants." (Dawn, 20 Apr 2001)

II. 4.2. PPP, PML

In an effort to put aside their historical differences, on 3 December 2000 the PPP and the PML, together with 10 regional parties, formed the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD). The ARD replaced the Grand Democratic Alliance which the PML had been reluctant to join, claiming that the GDA had been set up with the single goal of removing the Nawaz-Sharif government. (Dawn, 29 Oct 2000; 4 Dec 2000) Right from the start the ARD has been under close scrutiny by the authorities. While the government continued its search for officials and party leaders under the label of fighting corruption and loan defaulting it simultaneously stepped up its pressure to enforce the general ban on political activities. From February through May 2001 the Pakistani daily Dawn carried a number of reports on the detention of ARD activists, with peaks that amount to at least two waves of arrests of ARD leaders and supporters in March and late April/early May 2001.

Dawn reports that on 20 March 2001 over 300 political workers and leaders, including some former parliamentarians were arrested ahead of an ARD meeting in Lahore on 23 March 2001. According to the police record 180 people had been arrested by 10 pm. However, ARD deputy information secretary Munir Ahmad Khan stated that 1,650 workers had been arrested in 10 districts of Punjab. (Dawn, 21 Mar 2001) Amnesty International, in a recent report on the curtailment of the freedom of assembly in Pakistan, quotes police with stating that in March 2001 about 200 activists had been arrested. However, PML sources put the number of detainees at 2,000, while the PPP claimed that between 3,000 to 5,000 people had been arrested. Further on the arrests, ai reports that *"During arrests, police beat demonstrators with sticks though none reportedly resisted police. While most detainees were apparently not held on any formal grounds, some were detained under provisions of the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance which under section 16 allows detention on grounds of making a speech which "causes or is likely to cause fear or alarm to the public" or which "furthers or is likely to further any activity prejudicial to public safety or the maintenance of public order". All detainees appear to have been released since."* (ai, 30 May 2001)

Similarly, a police crackdown on the ARD prior to a planned meeting of ARD Sindh leaders ahead of an ARD May Day rally for the restoration of democracy in Nishtar Park resulted in the detention of a total of 678 activists (according to official sources) in Karachi. Contradicting the official numbers, the PML claimed that 840 of its activists were arrested in Karachi and a total of 1,500 in the province. (Dawn, 30 Apr 2001) On 30 April, the official number had increased to 700, with the Home Secretary Mukhtar Ahmed stating that the number of those taken into "protective custody" across the province was 850. (Dawn, 1 May 2001) On 3 May, Dawn reported that in response to open criticism of the previous arrests *"All of the 316 leaders and workers of the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy arrested during the protest against the government for preventing them from holding a rally at Nishtar Park on Tuesday were sent to jail on Wednesday for one week to two weeks."* On the same day, a Dawn article quotes the US State Department spokesman Philip Reeker with saying: *"We are disappointed that the government of Pakistan continues to suppress political activity. [...] The government's arrest of potential demonstrators without appropriate justification ... calls into question the Pakistan government's commitment to protect civil liberties, such as the freedom of assembly, a key component of good democratic governments"*. (Dawn, 3 May 2001)

Final Statement

Immediately after the coup prospects for democracy had improved in Pakistan. Over the past months, however, the influence of the militants has been steadily increasing and tolerance towards any citizen with other ideas or faith or interpretation of his/her belief has been decreasing. Although in the beginning the army half-heartedly attempted to take a hard stance against fundamentalism it has unfortunately given up its resistance against the Mullahs. Furthermore, despite the holding of elections a return to democracy appears as far away as ever. Political activities are severely restricted and freedoms of expression and assembly are violated on a daily basis. Still, we Pakistanis keep our hopes up and it is not the first time that we would say: "Only God can save Pakistan".

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